

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 663

EA 027 919

AUTHOR McPartland, James M.; And Others  
TITLE The Talent Development High School: Early Evidence of Impact on School Climate, Attendance, and Student Promotion. Report No. 2.  
INSTITUTION Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk, Baltimore, MD.  
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.  
PUB DATE Sep 96  
CONTRACT R117D40005  
NOTE 24p.; For the first report, see EA 027 918.  
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Attendance; College Preparation; \*Core Curriculum; Educational Environment; \*High Risk Students; \*High Schools; Instructional Program Divisions; \*Nontraditional Education; \*School Organization; Standards; Student Motivation; Student Promotion; Talent Development; Teacher Role; Teacher Student Ratio

## ABSTRACT

Sorting practices in the public schools place students, especially those from poor and minority families, at risk. The "talent-development" model is based on the assumption that all students, with adequate support, can learn. This report describes outcomes of the first Talent Development High School, which was established in September 1995 at Patterson High School in Baltimore, Maryland. The model at Patterson, which features career-focused academies for the upper grades, a ninth-grade academy with teams of teachers and students, and other key Talent Development components, was designed and developed by the school's faculty and administration with the participation of Johns Hopkins' Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR) staff as partners. First-year priorities included improvements in school climate, student attendance, and student-promotion rates. After the first 7 months of the 1995-96 school year, data indicate that, compared to previous years, there is dramatic improvement in overall school climate (student behavior and faculty collegial support), in student attendance, and in expected student-promotion rates, especially from 9th grade to 10th grade. (LMI)

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
\* from the original document. \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

ED 399 663

**CRESPAR**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as  
received from the person or organization  
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to  
improve reproduction quality.

☐ Points of view or opinions stated in this  
document do not necessarily represent  
official OERI position or policy.

# THE TALENT DEVELOPMENT HIGH SCHOOL

## Early Evidence of Impact on School Climate, Attendance, and Student Promotion

**James M. McPartland**

**Nettie Legters**

**Will Jordan**

**Edward L. McDill**

**Report No. 2 / September 1996**

**CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS PLACED AT RISK**

Johns Hopkins University & Howard University

**THE TALENT DEVELOPMENT HIGH SCHOOL**  
**Early Evidence of Impact on School Climate,**  
**Attendance, and Student Promotion**

**James M. McPartland, Nettie Legters, Will Jordan, & Edward L. McDill**  
**Johns Hopkins University**

**Report No. 2**

**September 1996**

Published by the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR), supported as a national research and development center by funds from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U. S. Department of Education (R-117-D40005). The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of OERI, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

## The Center

Every child has the capacity to succeed in school and in life. Yet far too many children, especially those from poor and minority families, are placed at risk by school practices that are based on a sorting paradigm in which some students receive high-expectations instruction while the rest are relegated to lower quality education and lower quality futures. The sorting perspective must be replaced by a "talent development" model that asserts that all children are capable of succeeding in a rich and demanding curriculum with appropriate assistance and support.

The mission of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR) is to conduct the research, development, evaluation, and dissemination needed to transform schooling for students placed at risk. The work of the Center is guided by three central themes — ensuring the success of all students at key development points, building on students' personal and cultural assets, and scaling up effective programs — and conducted through seven research and development programs and a program of institutional activities.

CRESPAR is organized as a partnership of Johns Hopkins University and Howard University, in collaboration with researchers at the University of California at Santa Barbara, the University of California at Los Angeles, University of Oklahoma, University of Chicago, Manpower Research Demonstration Corporation, WestEd Regional Laboratory, University of Memphis, and University of Houston-Clear Lake.

## **Abstract**

The first Talent Development High School was established in September 1995 at Patterson High School in Baltimore, Maryland. The model at Patterson, which features career-focused academies for the upper grades, a ninth grade academy with teams of teachers and students, and other key Talent Development components, was designed and developed by the school's faculty and administration with the participation of Johns Hopkins' CRESPAR staff as partners. Priorities set for the first year included improvements in school climate, student attendance, and student promotion rates. Early evidence after the first seven months of the 1995-96 school year indicates that, compared to previous years, there is dramatic improvement in overall school climate (student behavior and faculty collegial support), in student attendance, and in expected student promotion rates, especially from ninth grade to tenth grade.

## **Acknowledgments**

We acknowledge the contributions of Principal Bonnie Erickson, ninth-grade principal William Morrison, and all the faculty, administrators and staff at Patterson High School for their key roles in designing and implementing Talent Development reforms in their school. We also thank Leslie Jones of our Johns Hopkins team for her work in professional development for teachers and staff at Patterson.

## **Early Evidence of Impact on School Climate, Attendance, and Student Promotion in a Talent Development High School**

The first Talent Development High School was established in September 1995 at Patterson High School in Baltimore, Maryland. The model at Patterson, which features career-focused academies for the upper grades, a ninth grade academy with teams of teachers and students, and other key Talent Development components, was designed and developed by the school's faculty and administration with the participation of Johns Hopkins' CRESPAR staff as partners. Some priorities were set for the first year to address the most pressing problems at Patterson.

### **Patterson Prior to Career Academies**

Patterson High School enrolls about 2,000 students, of whom about 60 percent are African American, 30 percent white (mostly living in white ethnic neighborhoods of Greek, Polish and Italian heritage) and 10 percent American Indian, Asian, and Hispanic. The school is non-selective and geographically zoned, thus it receives all the students within its boundaries who do not gain admission to one of the district's three citywide high schools or three vocational-technical high schools, all of which have entrance requirements based on grades, tests, and attendance.

Patterson was one of the first two high schools cited in 1994 by the Maryland State Department of Education as "eligible for reconstitution" because of its low rankings and negative trends on dropout rates, student attendance, and student achievement tests. This designation is tantamount to saying that Patterson was one of the two worst high schools in the state of Maryland in 1994. The designation meant that the state would come in and take over the school or find a university or firm to do so if Patterson proved unable to provide a dramatic improvement plan (with district help) that the State Department of Education could accept.

In fact, there were two initial attempts to develop improvement plans that were not successful. In one, the district explored turning the school over to the Hyde Foundation, which was known for its "values education." This proposal was rejected by the Patterson parents and

community. In a second attempt, the school proposed to overhaul the teaching faculty through "zero-based staffing." This was rejected by the state as too vague.

In the summer of 1994, a new principal was brought in with a small team of associates. Faculty changes were made — some teachers left willingly, others not so willingly, and some new teachers came in. The new principal, her associates, and the new and existing faculty then worked together to develop a school improvement plan that featured several career-focused academies as schools-within-the-school, and a ninth grade academy built around interdisciplinary teacher teams.

At about the same time period, the proposal for the creation of CRESPAR was being developed by staff at Johns Hopkins and Howard Universities. The proposal included a detailed outline of the Talent Development Model for High Schools. This proposal won the competition for funding, and CRESPAR was established as a national research and development center funded primarily by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) in October, 1994.

CRESPAR staff made it known they were looking for school partners to work with on high school reform. The Maryland state school superintendent met with Hopkins researchers to urge CRESPAR to work with Patterson. This school was already under consideration by CRESPAR due to an earlier request from Patterson staff to the Johns Hopkins Center for assistance soon after the state announced its designation for reconstitution, but before the change in Patterson leadership or the CRESPAR grant.

In November 1994, CRESPAR Hopkins staff met with the Patterson leadership team to discuss a partnership. The Patterson improvement plan already under development contained key features of the Talent Development model of the CRESPAR proposal, including a common core curriculum for all students (which was district-wide policy) and an emphasis on creating small learning communities in the school with a career focus and using teacher teams. Given this match between the ongoing Patterson work and the CRESPAR model, a partnership was formed, and Hopkins staff joined the ongoing Patterson planning groups as regular team members.

It became immediately apparent to CRESPAR staff why Patterson was in major trouble with the state — the school learning environment was in chaos. Small groups of unruly students were constantly roaming the halls and stairways, and repeated faculty efforts to bring order to the building were unsuccessful. Teachers, unable to maintain peace in the halls, retreated to their classrooms where they tried to do their best with the students in their own

rooms. They kept the doors of their rooms closed, and many papered over their door windows to shut out the outside confusion.

Student attendance and lateness were serious problems, of such proportions that proposed solutions — such as daily detention for tardiness — could not be managed due to the overwhelming numbers. A policy to prevent lateness by closing the building one hour after school had begun, so that late students could not enter, was the only workable recourse to demonstrate the school's seriousness about lateness, but it required that almost all of the several sets of school doors be kept locked at all times (a violation of fire regulations).

The rate at which students failed courses and were left behind to repeat a grade was enormous. In 1993-94, over 80 percent failed the ninth grade (4 out of 5 students were *not* promoted to grade 10). In the planning year of 1994-95, this improved somewhat — about 50 percent of ninth graders failed to be promoted. A high rate of students being left back in grade 9 almost inevitably leads to a high rate of student dropouts. Indeed, Patterson enrolls over 600 new ninth graders each year, but has graduating classes well under 200.

Student test score performance was also poor on the Maryland minimum competency tests in Math, Writing and Citizenship, which are required for graduation. The Math test is actually intended to be passed in the seventh or eighth grade, but only about one quarter of Patterson students have done so by the end of the ninth grade.

### **Priorities on Climate, Attendance, and Promotions**

The improvement plan put together by the Patterson team addressed the state's concerns about test scores, attendance, dropouts, and climate. But the team became aware as the plan was developed and implemented that priorities needed to be set. School climate was definitely the first order of business. Little else could be achieved until the school environment, currently an overwhelming impediment to good teaching and learning, was transformed into a positive force at Patterson. Instead of students seeing the school as a perpetual playground and teachers seeing school authority as a joke, all needed to believe that Patterson had become a "real school" with a widely-respected seriousness of purpose. With such a transformation, students could be held to high standards of discipline and achievement, and teachers could feel good about working at Patterson to help students mature and learn.

Attendance emerged as the second priority. Studies of why Patterson students failed to pass their courses to gain promotion to the next grade level showed that poor attendance was the strongest correlate of course failures. Students who attended regularly passed most or all of their

classes — teachers found ways to motivate them to achieve a passing grade (although often a low passing grade). Because absenteeism is closely tied to failing to earn course credits, which leads to grade retention and dropout, improving student attendance was seen to be a top priority for improving promotion, school retention, and graduation rates.

The priority given to climate, attendance and promotion rates in the first year of implementing a Talent Development Model at Patterson took precedence over other goals of the model, such as improving classroom instruction in higher order competencies through new learning activities and methods. Nonetheless, many such efforts occurred simultaneously. The use of 90-minute classes in a four-period day was instituted as part of the school improvement plan. Faculty were provided staff development in using computers, cooperative learning, and project-based learning activities. Indeed, most of the time in Patterson's weekly 90-minute professional development sessions for faculty has been devoted this year to instructional improvement. (Students are released early every Wednesday to provide time for these sessions.) The improvement team clearly realized, however, that giving teachers new instructional tools without first vastly improving school climate and student attendance would do little to improve student learning, promotion, and graduation. On the other hand, traditional instruction conducted within the framework of a serious climate for learning, improved student attendance, and the four-period day could make major strides forward on these goals. Thus, Patterson still has far to go in impacting the type of classroom learning activities received by its students, but the school's efforts will shift to these factors as climate and attendance come under control.

## **The Talent Development Model at Patterson**

The Patterson school improvement plan, designed by the Patterson staff in a partnership with Johns Hopkins CRESPAR, addresses many of the components of the CRESPAR framework for a Talent Development High School. The components include (a) making schoolwork relevant, (b) providing opportunities for academic success, (c) providing a caring and supportive learning community, and (d) providing help with student problems.<sup>1</sup> Initial efforts at Patterson have focused primarily on changes in school organization to support these components.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>The Talent Development High School components are fully elaborated in LaPoint, V., Thompson, D., Jordan, W., and McPartland, J.M., "Essential Components for the Talent Development High School," CRESPAR Report No. 1, September 1996.

<sup>2</sup>Initiating changes in school organization to bring about changes in student outcomes is discussed by McPartland, J.M. in "Applying James Coleman's Education Theories to Practical School Reform," American Educational Research Association annual meeting, New York, April, 1996.

## **Patterson's Ninth Grade and Career Academies**

The major improvements at Patterson derive directly or indirectly from the establishment of Academies as five self-contained schools-within-a-school.

The ninth grade is housed in one wing of the building as "The Ninth Grade Success Academy," with its own entrance and classrooms (including computer and science labs). The ninth grade has its own Academy Principal, Academy Leader, and a teaching faculty that is divided into five interdisciplinary teams, each of which teaches a common group of 150-180 students in a four-period block schedule. Each teacher team has a common planning time each day to work together on student and instructional issues.

The Ninth Grade Success Academy decided that the teacher teams would target improved student attendance as a major goal. A full-day retreat was held off campus at mid-year in 1995 for ninth grade faculty and administrators to set attendance goals and to practice attendance-improvement approaches. As a consequence, phone calls to absent students are made daily by ninth grade teacher-team members.

Four career-focused academies were designed by Patterson staff for the upper-level (grades 10-12) students. The academy themes were generated by drawing on and combining multiple proposals submitted by individual Patterson faculty members and by groups of faculty. The four upper-level career academies, which opened at Patterson in September 1995, are Arts and Humanities, Business and Finance, Sports Studies and Health/Wellness, and Transportation and Engineering Technology. Like the Ninth Grade Success Academy, each upper-level career academy has its own entrance, its own area of the building, and its own faculty and administrators.

Students select their academy through a process of self-examination of career interests and presentations of academy offerings by academy staff. Although block-scheduling with teacher teams is not possible due to the multiple electives and individual needs of upper-level students, homeroom advisory groups have been formed to further enhance the school's caring human environment. Each academy is small enough (under 325 students) that problems of student attendance and lateness can be handled with individual students, through enforceable practices such as daily lateness detention.

## **Flexible Resources**

New practices have been instituted at Patterson to increase student motivation and opportunities for academic success. The Ninth Grade Success Academy has introduced Improvement Grades and Credit School to help students recover from failures. Improvement Grades give extra report card points to students who started out low but are catching up to meet high standards. Credit School meets for an additional hour after regular dismissal. It allows students who failed major courses in the first term, for a small fee, to attend regularly to make up the missed credit. All academies permit students to recover from spells of poor attendance early in the term – the school has an automatic-failure policy for high absenteeism, but 10 consecutive days of perfect attendance allows students to recover from a violation of the policy. In addition, the school is continuing previous voluntary coaching classes before and after school for students who need extra help.

## **Twilight School and Coordinated Services**

A significant number of students come to Patterson with serious personal problems that interfere with their schoolwork and negatively affect the school environment for other students and teachers. Some students enter Patterson from incarceration in state juvenile detention centers and become discipline problems in many Patterson classrooms. Other students have family responsibilities, either for care of their own children as teenage parents or for time-consuming support or assistance to their siblings or adult relatives. Others have substance abuse problems that not only damage their own life chances, but also draw their peers into self-destructive activities.

Patterson is provided by the district with a full-time professional health suite and a staff of social workers, school psychologists, and guidance counselors who provide on-site services or referrals for students whose personal needs cannot be handled by the teacher teams or adult advisors. Regular instruction and discussions by Patterson staff are conducted on topics of teenage sexuality and drug or alcohol issues.

Patterson faculty developed an alternative after-hours school called the Twilight School to provide students who have serious discipline problems with a setting in which they will not disturb other learners and in which they can be helped to adjust to their school responsibilities. The Twilight School meets daily for three hours after the regular school has been dismissed, and offers small classes in basic academic subjects and personal coping skills. The purpose

is to help students move back into the regular school with improved chances of managing their behavior well in the context of regular school rules, regulations, and teaching staff.

## **Early Evidence of Effects at Patterson**

At this time, statistical evidence is available to compare conditions at Patterson in the 1994-95 school year with conditions in 1995-96. The evidence is drawn from faculty surveys about climate and teaching conditions, student attendance rates by grade level and month, and report card grades and course credits through the first 18-week term. We are also collecting similar data from other non-selective high schools in the district, which allows control group comparisons.

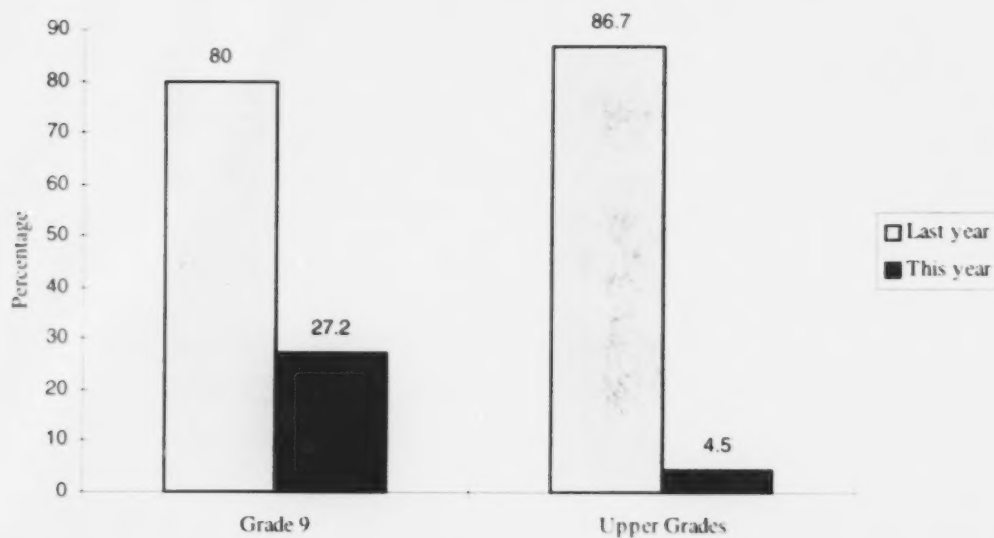
### **School Climate**

Patterson teacher surveys show a dramatic change in the learning climate of the school since the Talent Development reforms have been instituted. Last year, almost all of the Patterson teachers believed the school's learning environment was *not* conducive to school achievement for most students. This year, almost none of the Patterson teachers feel this way. Figure 1 shows this complete turn-around in teacher perceptions of the learning environment at Patterson.<sup>3</sup> The change is somewhat more overwhelming in the upper grades than in the ninth grade — the percentage difference is 86.7 vs. 4.5 in the upper grade and 80.0 vs. 27.2 in grade nine. The size of both these differences is rarely encountered in social science research.

---

<sup>3</sup>Teachers surveyed last school year and those surveyed this school year are not exactly comparable samples. As noted, a number of last year's teachers (about 20%) were replaced by teachers new to the school this year. The turn-around in teacher perceptions is still impressive.

**Figure 1**  
**Percent of Teachers Who Agree That The Learning Environment**  
**is Not Conducive to School Achievement for Most Students**



Teacher collegiality and helpfulness to one another also shows impressive improvement from the previous year. Figure 2 shows that last year only about thirteen percent agreed that "this school seems like a big family: everyone is so close and cordial" compared to about half who agree this year.

**Figure 2**  
**Percent of Teachers Who Agree That This School Seems Like a**  
**Big Family; Everyone is so Close and Cordial**

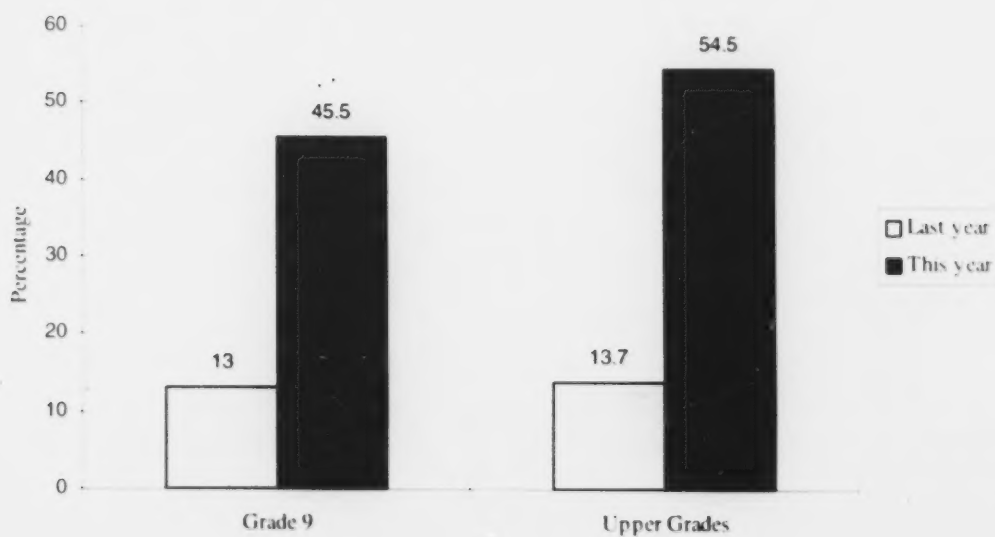
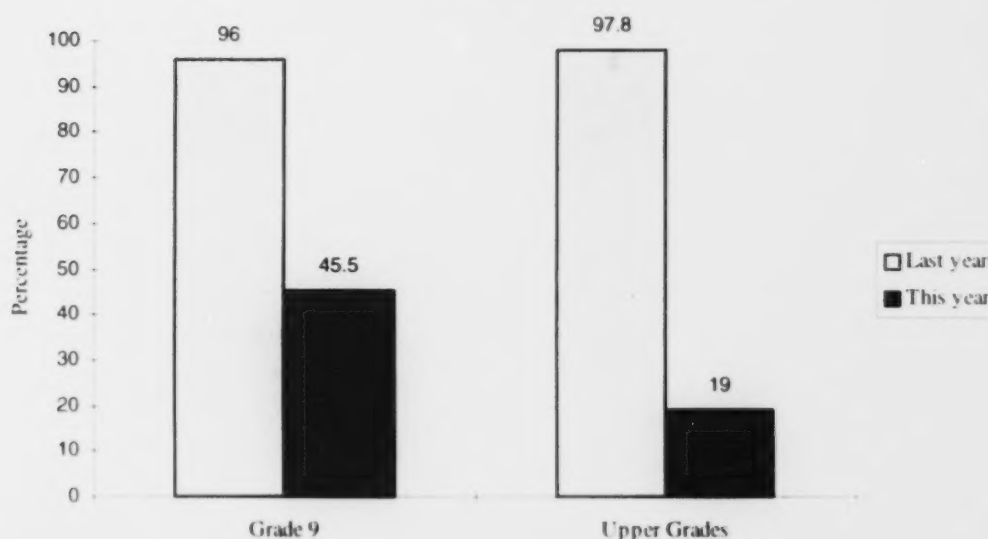


Figure 3 shows that Patterson teachers also agree that the school is moving in the right direction in terms of student absenteeism as a serious problem. Last year there was nearly unanimous agreement that absenteeism was of serious proportions. This year, the percent who agree has been halved in the ninth grade and is down to less than twenty percent in the upper grades. Below, we present actual attendance statistics that reflect the accuracy of perceptions that student behavior has significantly improved, although much room remains for additional advances.

**Figure 3**  
**Percent of Teachers Who Strongly Agree Absenteeism is a Problem**



When teachers are asked to directly compare this year with last year, they make clear distinctions about the changes they see in different components of school climate and teacher working conditions. Table 1 lists 20 different school problems that can detract from a climate of safety and seriousness. It shows that Patterson teachers see significant improvements in almost all of these problems since last year. Again, the perceived improvements are somewhat greater in the upper-level career academies than in the Ninth Grade Academy, although the same kinds of improvements are seen in all cases.

Table 1 shows that teachers perceive that student behavior in the halls, stairways, and cafeteria, and problems of student class-cutting are most dramatically better compared to last

year — 83.0, 62.7, and 58.5 percent of teachers respectively select the most positive extreme on a seven-point evaluation scale.

The set of items regarding faculty and staff relations comes next in teachers' evaluations of the positive changes at Patterson. About two-thirds or more give comparison ratings in the two most positive categories to conditions of "teachers working together," "support of teachers by school administration," and "school spirit of faculty and administration."

Teachers also perceive positive changes in student daily attendance and student lateness. Again, about two thirds of teachers select the top two positive change categories, but somewhat fewer choose the very top category of "much better."

Instructional changes are also seen as predominately constructive, but the ratings are not quite as consistently and extremely positive. Items about students' interest in learning activities, preparation for state functional tests, and quality of classroom instruction do not attract the very highest rates as often as items in the other clusters.

The only area in which there is *not* a perception that Patterson is better this year is class size. More teachers indicate that their classes are larger this year than indicate that their classes are smaller. And more report that things are about the same with regard to class size than with regard to any other school condition in the list.

Overall, these findings show that Patterson is making excellent progress on its school climate improvement priorities in the first year of the Talent Development Model. Improved school climate has occurred as student behavior in halls and stairways has definitely come under control, faculty collegial support is much better, and student attendance is significantly improving. The ninth grade continues to be more of a challenge on each of these goals, even though significant progress is evident for ninth graders as well. The instructional program is also showing signs of positive change, but less so than in other areas. There is certainly room for further improvement in the liveliness and effectiveness of classroom learning activities.

**Table 1**  
**Teachers' Assessments of School Climate for May 1995 and October 1995**  
 (% Teachers reporting that the following are a *serious problem*)

|    | Problem                              | All    |      | 9th Grade |      | Upper Level |      |
|----|--------------------------------------|--------|------|-----------|------|-------------|------|
|    |                                      | Spring | Fall | Spring    | Fall | Spring      | Fall |
| a. | Tardiness                            | 83.7   | 21.1 | 76.0      | 40.9 | 88.9        | 6.8  |
| b. | Physical Conflict                    | 45.3   | 3.7  | 56.0      | 9.1  | 35.6        | 2.3  |
| c. | Gang Activities                      | 10.7   | 2.7  | 8.3       | 9.1  | 9.1         | 0.0  |
| d. | Robbery or Theft                     | 28.2   | 8.1  | 24.0      | 19.0 | 31.8        | 4.7  |
| e. | Vandalism                            | 64.0   | 5.3  | 52.0      | 13.6 | 71.1        | 2.3  |
| f. | Absenteeism                          | 96.5   | 29.7 | 96.0      | 45.5 | 97.8        | 19.0 |
| g. | Lack of Student Interest in Learning | 67.1   | 18.7 | 72.0      | 27.3 | 66.7        | 15.9 |
| h. | Sale of Drugs                        | 20.0   | 8.7  | 20.8      | 19.0 | 17.1        | 4.9  |
| i. | Use of Alcohol                       | 8.8    | 4.3  | 8.0       | 9.1  | 7.3         | 2.4  |
| j. | Use of Illegal Drugs                 | 22.6   | 8.5  | 24.0      | 22.7 | 18.2        | 2.4  |
| k. | Possession of Weapons                | 8.8    | 2.9  | 8.0       | 9.5  | 7.3         | 0.0  |
| l. | Physical Abuse of Teachers           | 21.4   | 4.2  | 25.0      | 13.6 | 18.2        | 0.0  |
| m. | Lack of Student Focus on Future      | 57.6   | 24.0 | 56.0      | 40.9 | 60.0        | 13.6 |
| n. | Class Cutting                        | 84.7   | 14.7 | 84.0      | 45.5 | 82.2        | 0.0  |
| o. | Students Under Influence             | 16.7   | 8.5  | 16.0      | 22.7 | 15.6        | 2.4  |
| p. | Verbal Abuse of Teachers             | 65.1   | 21.3 | 72.0      | 50.0 | 62.2        | 11.4 |
| q. | Racial/Ethnic Conflict               | 25.9   | 5.4  | 24.0      | 18.2 | 24.4        | 0.0  |
| r. | Cheating                             | 14.1   | 11.0 | 16.0      | 22.7 | 11.4        | 4.7  |
| s. | Lack of Student Knowledge of College | 29.4   | 20.0 | 24.0      | 22.7 | 33.3        | 18.2 |
| t. | Teacher Absenteeism                  | 10.8   | 0.0  | 12.0      | 0.0  | 11.6        | 0.0  |
| N  | SAMPLE SIZE                          | 86     | 76   | 25        | 22   | 45          | 44   |

## Student Attendance

The strong emphasis at Patterson on improving student attendance through interventions by ninth grade teacher team members has paid off with significantly higher rates of ninth grade attendance compared to recent previous years. The upper level career academies, which start out with higher base rates of previous attendance, also show some improvement this year in student attendance, but the gains are primarily in the eleventh grade and are much lower than the gains in the ninth grade.

Table 2 presents monthly student attendance rates for this year (1995-96) compared to the average of the previous three years at Patterson High School. Rates at each grade level are shown as well as the schoolwide rates. The bottom rows give the year-to-date rates for the first seven months of the school year. In the ninth grade, which has had the poorest attendance in recent years of any grade in the school, student attendance has improved by 9.4 percentage points since the beginning of the year, which reflects a 14.3 percent increase. The current ninth grade average monthly attendance of 75.0 percent is now quite close to the tenth grade rate of 78.2 percent, which has not improved much over previous years. The attendance rates are highest overall in the eleventh and twelfth grades, in part because most of the poorest attenders have dropped out of school by this time. Some attendance improvements can be seen in the twelfth grade (1.4 percent) and especially in the eleventh grade (4.8 percent), but these are much smaller than the ninth grade gains. Schoolwide, attendance is up 6.1 percentage points over the average of the past three years (from 71.6 to 77.7), an increase of 8.5 percent.

The absence of significant progress in grade 10 attendance rates probably reflects the greater number of ninth graders who were promoted last year compared to promotion rates of previous years. About half the ninth grade was promoted last year, which is more than twice the rate of the previous year. This means many students who would have previously been ninth grade repeaters are tenth graders this year, and they bring poorer attendance habits with them. Thus, more of the attendance problems are being shared by the tenth grade this year. By not falling back in tenth grade attendance rates this year, Patterson is probably doing a better overall job in attendance with a more problematic tenth grade population.

**Table 2**  
**Comparison of Student Attendance at Patterson High School for**  
**Last Three Years and This Year**

|                     |           | Grade 9 | Grade 10 | Grade 11 | Grade 12 | School |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| <b>September</b>    | Last 3    | 74.7    | 83.3     | 85.7     | 89.4     | 79.4   |
|                     | This Year | 80.1    | 81.4     | 85.7     | 87.8     | 81.9   |
|                     | Gain      | +5.4    | -1.9     | 0        | -1.6     | +2.5   |
| <b>October</b>      | Last 3    | 70.0    | 82.9     | 82.5     | 85.5     | 76.0   |
|                     | This Year | 76.3    | 79.2     | 83.5     | 85.3     | 79.2   |
|                     | Gain      | +6.3    | -3.7     | +1.0     | -0.2     | +3.2   |
| <b>November</b>     | Last 3    | 63.4    | 78.1     | 78.1     | 81.5     | 70.5   |
|                     | This Year | 73.7    | 77.7     | 81.7     | 81.8     | 77.3   |
|                     | Gain      | +10.3   | -0.4     | +3.6     | +0.3     | +6.8   |
| <b>December</b>     | Last 3    | 62.0    | 72.0     | 71.2     | 76.2     | 67.0   |
|                     | This Year | 66.8    | 73.4     | 78.0     | 78.1     | 71.9   |
|                     | Gain      | +4.8    | +1.4     | +6.8     | +1.9     | +4.9   |
| <b>January</b>      | Last 3    | 60.0    | 74.3     | 73.3     | 76.3     | 66.7   |
|                     | This Year | 79.5    | 82.6     | 85.0     | 85.6     | 82.0   |
|                     | Gain      | +19.5   | +8.3     | +11.7    | +9.3     | +15.3  |
| <b>February</b>     | Last 3    | 62.9    | 75.9     | 75.7     | 80.2     | 69.7   |
|                     | This Year | 73.8    | 77.7     | 81.5     | 79.9     | 75.6   |
|                     | Gain      | +10.9   | +1.8     | +5.8     | -0.3     | +5.9   |
| <b>March</b>        | Last 3    | 66.5    | 76.5     | 75.7     | 80.2     | 71.6   |
|                     | This Year | 75.1    | 75.7     | 80.6     | 80.2     | 75.8   |
|                     | Gain      | +8.6    | -0.8     | +4.9     | 0        | +4.2   |
| <b>Year-to-date</b> | Last 3    | 65.6    | 77.6     | 77.5     | 81.3     | 71.6   |
|                     | This Year | 75.0    | 78.2     | 82.3     | 82.7     | 77.7   |
|                     |           | +9.4    | +0.6     | +4.8     | +1.4     | +6.1   |

We expect student attendance to continue to improve at Patterson High School as a new instructional program takes hold in the ninth grade and upper-level academies. The improvements in attendance so far have been produced by a safer school climate and especially by the efforts of teachers in regularly phoning students who miss school. But the drawing power of the school has not yet changed much in terms of daily classroom activities that

students find of great interest and involvement. As Patterson's teachers become more comfortable at using technology, project-based learning, cooperative learning and other methods to more actively involve students in challenging learning activities, attendance should further improve to reflect the greater attraction of students to the content and activities in their classrooms.

The improvements this year in Patterson's schoolwide attendance rates far exceed the record of any of the eight other non-selective high schools in the district. Over the past year, Patterson has moved from one of the two worst schools to one of the two best schools in attendance rates at the non-selective high schools. Table 3 shows Patterson with a gain of 6.3 percent in student attendance, where most schools had registered losses and the next best school showed only a 0.9 percent gain. Last year, Patterson's attendance rate of 70.9 percent was second from the bottom. This year, Patterson's rate of 77.2 percent is second from the top, exceeded only by an unusually small non-selective high school that consistently registers an 80+ percent attendance rate. These figures are through the first seven months of the school year, with Patterson still showing monthly improvements where most other schools are now on downward monthly trends. Thus, it is likely that the full year totals will show even greater Patterson improvements in comparison to other district schools serving similar student populations.

**Table 3**  
**A Comparison of Attendance Changes Through March at the**  
**Nine Baltimore Comprehensive High Schools**

|                  | <b>Last Year</b> | <b>This Year</b> | <b>Change</b> |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| <b>Patterson</b> | 70.9             | 77.2             | +6.3          |
| <b>B</b>         | 68.0             | 66.9             | -1.1          |
| <b>C</b>         | 74.8             | 74.5             | -0.3          |
| <b>D</b>         | 72.0             | 68.7             | -3.3          |
| <b>E</b>         | 71.9             | 68.3             | -3.6          |
| <b>F</b>         | 71.8             | 72.7             | +0.9          |
| <b>G</b>         | 71.2             | 59.1             | -12.1         |
| <b>H</b>         | 84.2             | 83.8             | -0.4          |
| <b>I</b>         | 72.6             | 70.8             | -1.8          |

## Student Promotion

The improved attendance rates in the ninth grade bode well for improved promotion rates to the tenth grade, because regularly attending students are much more likely to pass their courses and earn the credits needed to move on to the next grade. It's too early in the year to know for sure how many students will be promoted, but the first term course grades received at the end of January give a good basis for predicting promotion rates.

Table 4 shows the percent of students who earned promotion last year, with two predictions about the likely promotion rate at the end of this year. The first prediction is simply the percent of students who passed three or four of their courses in the first term. Five credits are needed for promotion, and these students already have three or four of them and have four more chances to earn additional course credits in the Spring term. These students seem certain to pass, so the first prediction is a minimum promotion rate to be expected. The second prediction sets a higher expected rate because some of the students who earned two or fewer credits in the first term can still make it to the next grade on time. Some of them will pass enough courses in the Spring term to reach the required five credits for promotion. Others will make up missing credits by attending Summer School or the ninth grade Credit school that meets after regular school hours. We looked at the numbers with two credits or enrolled in Credit school to give a second more optimistic prediction of the promotion rates at the end of the year.

Table 4 shows that the ninth grade Academy is already well on its way to bettering last year's promotion rate. Whereas only 47.3 percent earned promotion the previous year, 69.1 percent are poised for promotion this year, based on passing most of their courses in the first term. We expect this rate to reach 80 percent, given the numbers now making up a credit in Credit school and reasonable estimates of current term successes and summer school users.

**Table 4**  
**Promotion Rates Last Year and Predicted Promotion Rates for this Year,**  
**by Patterson Grades**

|                       | <b>Last Year<br/>Promotion Rate</b> | <b>Minimum<br/>Predicted Rate*</b> | <b>Expected<br/>Predicted Rate*</b> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Grade 9 to 10</b>  | 47.3                                | 69.1                               | 80                                  |
| <b>Grade 10 to 11</b> | 72.1                                | 72.1                               | 80                                  |
| <b>Grade 11 to 12</b> | 76.8                                | 77.6                               | 85                                  |

\* Minimum Predicted Rate = Percent who passed 3 or 4 of their four courses in the first term

\* Expected Predicted Rate = Corrections for number with 2 first term credits who will pass the needed 3 in the second term and/or make up missed credits in Summer School or Credit School

On the other hand, the current upper level students are almost exactly in the same position for promotion as last year's class. Tenth graders got promoted at the rate of 72.1 percent last year, which is the same percentage of tenth graders who passed three or four courses in the Fall term. Eleventh graders are also closely matched in the comparison of last year's promotion rate and this year's first term credits earned in three or four courses. As with ninth graders, we expect that this first prediction is a minimum for the upper grades, given opportunities for others to earn sufficient credits in the Spring or to make up work for promotion to the next grade. Our revised prediction therefore increases the expected promotion rate to 80 percent for eleventh graders and 85 percent for twelfth graders.

Improvements in promotion rates, especially from grade 9 to 10, which is where many students are currently lost, are critical for reducing the dropout rate. Because being left back to repeat a grade is the first decisive step in the dropout process, helping students earn regular promotion across the grades is how the Talent Development High School will hold students in school through graduation. Besides producing more students with high school diplomas, more students will come closer to fully developing their talents as each additional year of schooling will produce more learning for every student.

### **Realistic High Expectations for the Talent Development Model**

These early results indicate that one of the worst high schools in an urban district, designated for reconstitution by the state, is well on its way to becoming a very good school in its first year as a Talent Development High School. The teachers and administrators of Patterson High School have been able to turn their school around in terms of the climate for learning. They have also significantly improved student attendance and the probabilities of student promotions and graduations. Another sign of this school's initial success is the need to add a fifth upper-level career academy for next year to accommodate the greater numbers of students who are attending school regularly and earning promotion to the next grade.

The momentum of improved student outcomes should continue at Patterson for the next year and beyond, as the curriculum and learning activities are improved further to incorporate career themes and to present more engaging lessons. These expected developments should help accelerate further improvements in student attendance, course credits earned, and promotion and graduation rates. This will produce the talent development outcomes for students that give this model its name.

Plans are in place to add more Talent Development sites at the beginning of the 1996-1997 school year in Washington, DC (working with CRESPAR at Howard University) and in Baltimore (working with CRESPAR at Johns Hopkins University). These new Talent Development High Schools will apply the lessons learned and practices developed at Patterson and, with Patterson, will serve to create the basis for moving to national dissemination in the near future.

# CRESPAR

Johns Hopkins University  
Center for Social Organization of Schools  
3505 North Charles Street  
Baltimore MD 21218  
410-516-8800 / 410-516-8890 fax

Howard University  
2900 Van Ness Street, NW  
Washington DC 20008  
202-806-8484 / 202-806-8498 fax